



Midterm Status Report 2002 and Application for Continuation in 2003

For research projects financed by grants from
The Directorate for Food, Fisheries and Agro Business
under the Danish Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries

1. Research program

Research in organic farming 2000-2005 (DARCOF II)

2. Project title and number

III.8 The Role of the Distribution Channel in the Establishment and Maintenance of Consumer Trust in Organic Foods: A Qualitative Sociological Investigation

3. Head of project

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4. Participating institutes

The only participating institute is:
Research Dept. of Human Nutrition & Centre for Advanced Food Studies

5. Other project staff

Research Assistant Per Dissing Odgaard
Technical Assistant: NN

6. Project period (month, year)

Start of project: 01.10.2002
End of project: 31.12.2004

7. Midterm description of the project, its results and progress, and application for continuation in 2003

The project is due to start on October 1st, 2002.

A. Project summary

This project is designed to follow up perspectives that emerged from a critical review of the available national and international social research concerning consumer motives for buying organic foods (O'Doherty Jensen *et al.*, *Økologiske Fødevarer og menneskets sundhed*. Foulum: FØJO-rapport nr. 14, 2001). Most of the available research is based on the premise that risk perception plays a significant role in motivating consumers, such that product advantages are seen as accruing to organic foods in so far as they do *not* incorporate such risks. In contrast, the present project is designed to develop an alternative conceptual framework regarding these issues, inspired by Polanyi's economic theory. The approach is one that yields the possibility of conceiving buyer motives in positive terms, and it suggests that consumers' discernment of both the trustworthiness of products and of food risks are dependent upon their discernment of the trustworthiness of producers. Since distribution channels comprises the interface between consumers and producers, this project will accordingly compare differences between consumers who currently purchase organic foods through distinct channels, and is designed to explore an alternative set of hypotheses regarding the basis for consumer trust in and demand for organic foods.

It is planned to undertake a qualitative sociological investigation of Danish adults who purchase organic foods through one of three distribution channels. The sample (n = 100) is stratified and includes 3 sub-groups of consumers. Qualitative data will be collected primarily by means of focus group interviews, while observation and personal interview will be employed as secondary methods of data collection. The ob-

jective of the analysis is to compare differences among and between sub-samples in regard to their conceptions and assessments of organic foods, producers and production methods. An empirical analysis will be based on complete transcripts of all audio-recorded data collected in the course of interview sessions and coded by means of a standard computer programme. The preliminary hypotheses are that conceptions and assessments of products are not divorced from conceptions and assessments of producers, that consumer assessments of both are viewed in moral as well as market terms, and that the distribution channel exerts an influence on conceptions and assessments of producers, production methods and products. Following completion of the analysis, the attempt will be made to assess the practical implications of its results, seen from the viewpoints of organic farmers and consumers respectively, with particular reference to the principle of 'nearness' (*nærhedsprincippet*).

Apart from making a contribution to the on-going debate regarding the principles of organic farming, this project will yield an analysis of new empirical data regarding consumer conceptions of organic products and producers. It will also present a challenge to current consumer research in this area, which tends to be undertaken within a somewhat narrow conceptual framework and generally with a view to serving marketing interests in the shorter term.

Table A.1: Work package list (from application)

No.	Work package title	Participants*	Budget (1.000 DKK)	Start	End	Deliverable no(s):
1**	Consumer trust in organic foods	<u>K. O'Doherty</u> <u>Jensen</u> Per Dissing Odgaard	1.550	10:02	12:04	D1-D10

*Responsible participants are underlined

**This research project comprises a single workpackage

B. Objectives and expected achievements

The main objectives are:

- To develop a more adequate conceptual framework for understanding and explaining consumer demand for organic foods.
- To assess the adequacy of this framework by applying it to a sociological analysis of qualitative data regarding 3 sub-groups of Danish consumers, distinguished by the distribution channel through which purchases are made.
- To assess the practical implications of this empirical analysis for consumers and for producers and processors of organic foods with specific regard to the principle of 'nearness' (*nærhedsprincippet*), as this principle impinges upon the strategic selection of distribution channels for organic foods.

C. Midterm results and progress

Ad. Points (C), (C.1.), (C.2), (D) and (E): it should be noted that this project will commence on October 1st, 2002.

C.1 Description (summary) of main results and conclusions

Not applicable at this point in time

C.2 Fulfilment of deliverables and milestones

Not applicable at this point in time

(To be completed for each work package)

WP number and title	Time schedule according to application	Deviations, if any*
Deliverables		
1 Selection of distribution channels and recruitment methods	01.03	
2 Development of screening instrument	02.03	
3 Development of interview schedule	03.03	
4 Focus group data collected and transcribed (phase 1)	04.03	
5 Focus group data collected and transcribed (phase 2)	05.03	
6 Focus group data collected and transcribed (phase 3)	06.03	
7 Data coding undertaken	08.03	
8 Analysis of empirical data undertaken	05.04	
9 Evaluation of results undertaken	08.04	
10 Dissemination of research results	08-12.04	
Milestones		
1 Brief report: Data on distribution channels and recruitment methods	03.03	
2 Participants recruited to focus groups (phase 1)	04.03	
3 Participants recruited to focus groups (phase 2)	05.03	
4 Participants recruited to focus groups (phase 3)	06.03	
5 All data collection completed	07.03	
6 Empirical analysis completed	05.04	
7 Brief report: practical implications of results	09.04	
8 Research report completed	12.04	

Deviations are to be further discussed in D

D. Description of deviations and subsequent adjustments of plans

Not applicable at this point in time

E. Project publications and other products

Not applicable at this point in time

F. Scientific education

This project will provide a newly qualified anthropologist with work experience that is relevant for his future career for a limited period of 4 months approx.

G. National and international cooperation

It is expected that different aspects of this research will be developed and discussed in consultation with individuals, research teams and networks in Denmark and abroad and will be presented in a variety of settings.

Aspects regarding consumer research with particular reference to the sociology and anthropology of food practices will be discussed with the Research Group regarding Sociology of Food, Research Dept. of Human Nutrition, RVAU; the network of consumer researchers who are represented in the Advisory Committee of Experts regarding Consumer Affairs (EMFU), Ministry of Commerce, Copenhagen; members of the Dept. of Sociology at the University of Lund, University College Cork and Trinity College Dublin, and the Consumer Research Network of the European Sociological Association.

Aspects regarding research with specific reference to organic foods will be discussed with the Co-ordinating Group regarding Interdisciplinary Studies of Organic foods, Research Dept. of Human Nutrition, RVAU; members of the Organic Farming Group, Dept. of Agricultural Science, RVAU; the network of Danish consumer researchers currently engaged in research regarding organic foods; members of the National Institute of Consumer Research (SIFO), Norway; participants in the following EU-funded projects: 'Trust in Food', an RTD project co-ordinated by Uni Kjærnes, SIFO, Oslo, and 'Recommendations for improved procedures for securing consumer oriented food safety and quality of certified organic foods from plough to plate', a CA project to be co-ordinated by Kirsten Brandt, Danish Institute of Agricultural Sciences, Aarslev.

Some aspects regarding the theoretical framework to be employed in the analysis of data have been presented and will be further discussed with members of the NTSMB-network, under the leadership of Cynthia Grund, Dept. of Philosophy, University of Southern Denmark, Odense.

H. Critical reflection on the project

Not applicable in regard to the research process at this point in time

8. Budget

A. Account for any change in budgets

Not applicable

B. Budget for the whole project (1.000 DKK)

Total consumption of funds from DARCOF and expected consumption this year and coming years

Note: Only 1 department and 1 institution is participating in this project

Year:	Consumption before 2002	Expected consumption 2002	2003	2004	2005	Total
Man-months	none	3	15	9	None	27
Scientific personnel	none	3	12	9	None	24
Technical personnel	none	None	3	none	None	3

Year:	Consumption before 2002	Expected consumption 2002	2003	2004	2005	Total
Salaries	0	122.286	492.182	389.199	0	1003.667
Scientific personnel	0	122.286	446.766	389.199	0	958.251
Technical personnel	0	0	45.416	0	0	45.416
Other operational costs	0	28.000	225.000	35.000	0	288.000
Equipment	0	0	0	0	0	0
Others (please specify)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Direct costs	0	150.286	717.182	424.199	0	1291.667
Indirect costs (20% of direct costs)	0	30.057	143.436	84.840	0	258.333
Total	0	180.343	860.618	509.039	0	1550.000

Comments: Costs for scientific salaries in 2003 include 4 months salary to a research assistant. Other operational costs include: fieldwork expenses (board and transport), materials prepared for focus group interviews, recruitment costs (minimum 1/3 to be undertaken by a market research company), rental of equipment and venues for focus group interviews, provisioning of participants and other running costs including conference participation and costs incurred in relation to the dissemination of results.

9. Signatures and stamps

Name	Institute	Date	Signature
Head of project Katherine O'Doherty Jensen	Research Department of Human Nutrition and Centre for Advanced Food Studies, The Royal Veterinary and Agricultural University, Copenhagen	Sept. 30 th , 2002	